Journey to AI

From AI readiness to action plan.



About this guide

Taking organizations from AI aware to AI ready.

Explore topics

Organizations that build a foundation for a scalable, secure AI stack will have a competitive edge in the future.

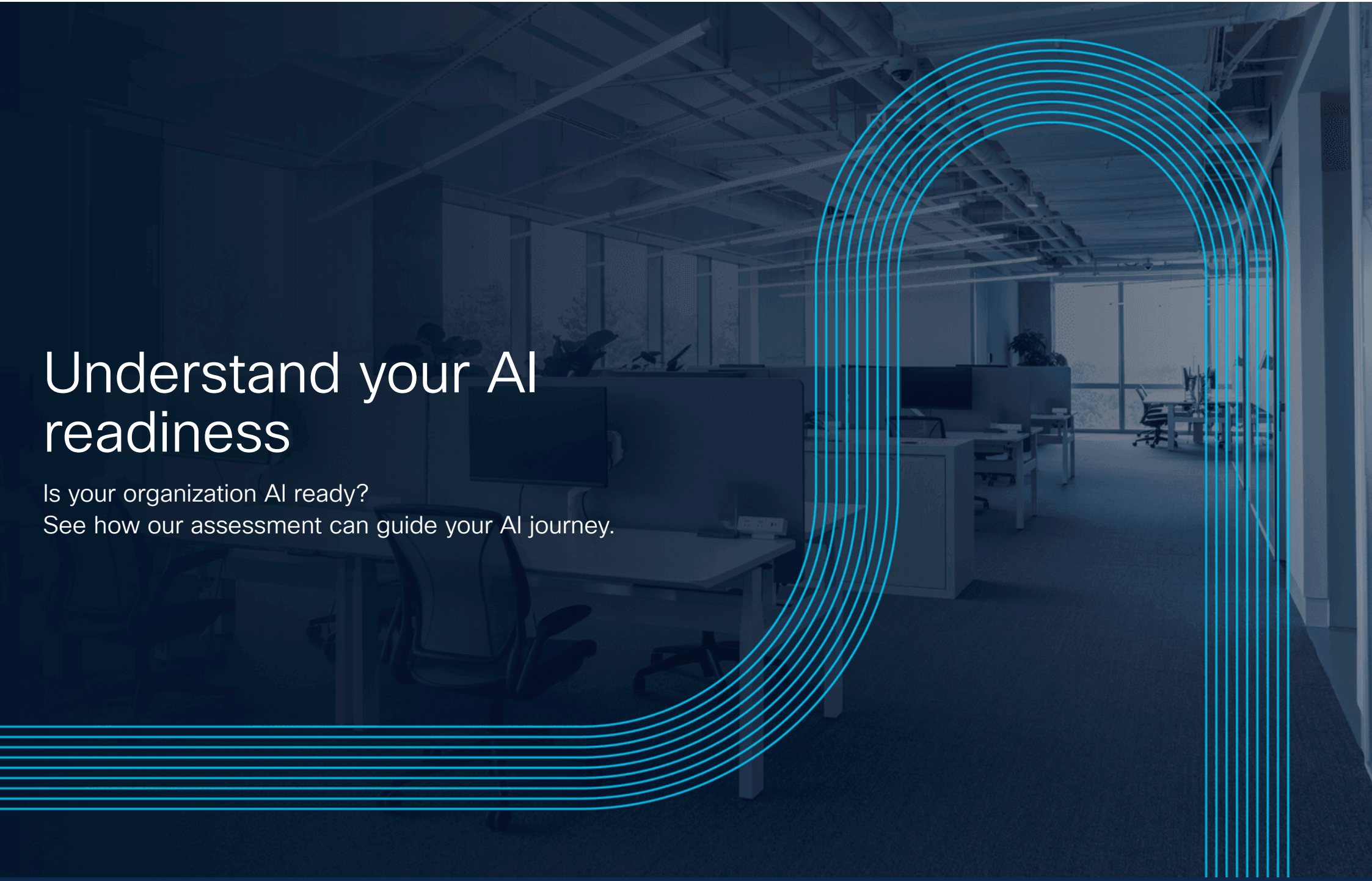
This guide will help you assess your current AI readiness and develop an action plan for moving forward.

AI readiness

Five pillars of AI success

AI action plan





Understand your AI readiness

Is your organization AI ready?
See how our assessment can guide your AI journey.

Understand your AI readiness

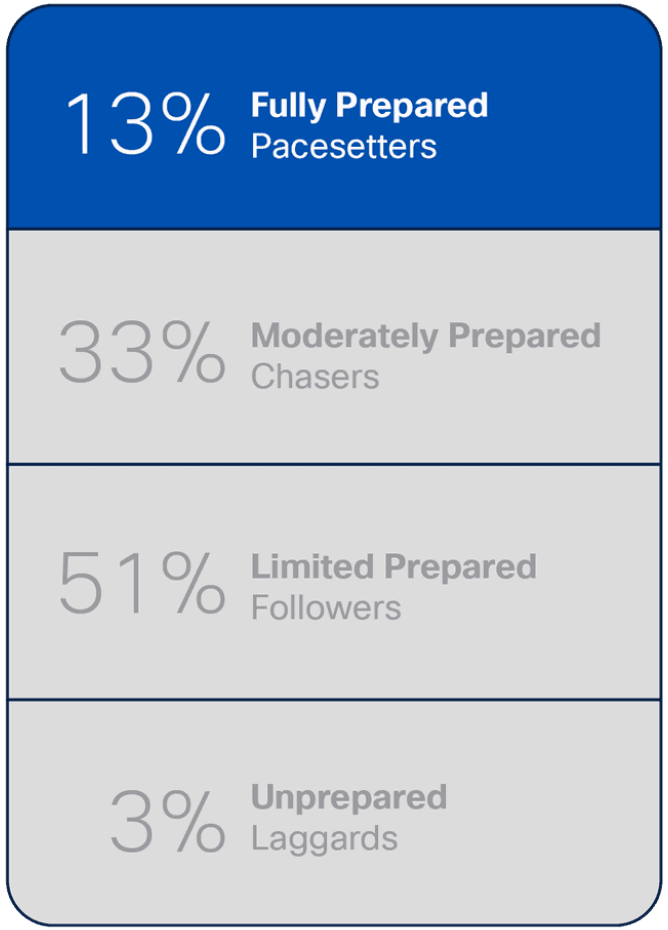
AI is far from new, but now it's driving change that will impact how the global economy and the people who fuel it live and work. Like the Industrial Revolution, the advent of the internet, and the mobile phone, AI will bring increased innovation, connectivity, productivity, and opportunity. But are organizations ready for the risks and impacts, both technological and cultural, it poses?

Take the assessment

See how other organizations stack up

Cisco evaluated about 8,000 businesses spanning 30 global markets to measure AI readiness across key pillars: Strategy, Infrastructure, Data, Talent, Governance, and Culture. The Cisco AI Readiness Index categorized organizations into the following levels:

- **13% Pacesetters (fully prepared)**
- **33% Chasers (moderately prepared)**
- **51% Followers (limited preparedness)**
- **3% Laggards (unprepared)**

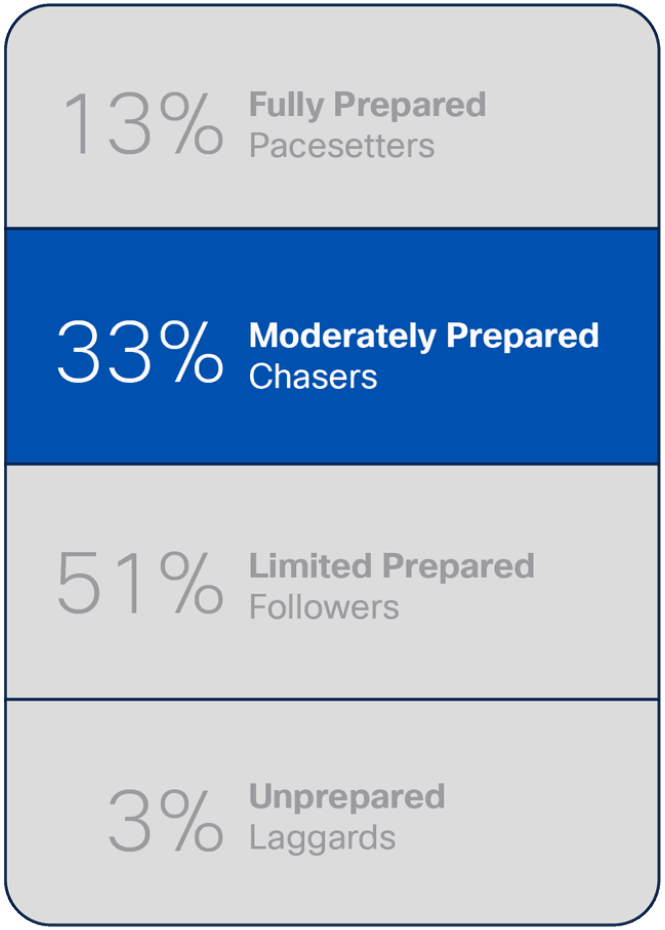


Pacesetters

Congratulations! You're in the top 13% of global organizations who are feeling prepared and ready to tackle AI. You scored an 86 or higher on the Cisco AI Readiness Assessment. You're hitting the ground running and taking the necessary steps to adopt, deploy, and leverage AI across your business. Here are some helpful tips to keep you on the fast-track and maintain your competitive edge.

Steps to build upon your success:

- Monitor network usage and performance to ensure AI workloads are supported and you can keep scaling to meet additional demands.
- Test AI algorithms consistently to eliminate bias and potential ethical concerns.
- Nurture your talent and continue to upskill employees to further develop a culture that embraces AI and minimizes fear.
- Keep security top of mind to protect data and ensure responsible AI usage.

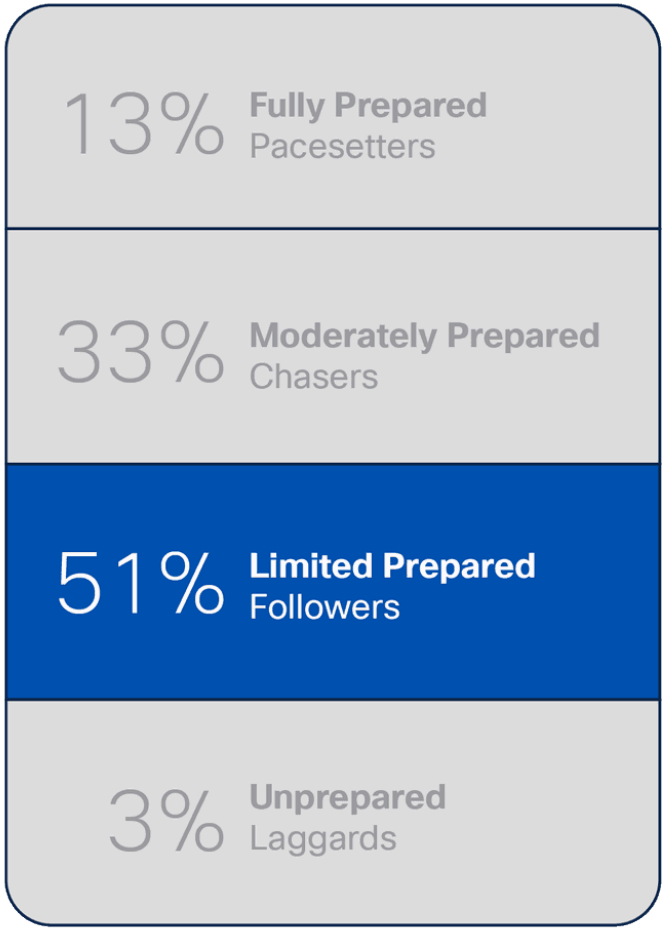


Chasers

Congratulations, you're on the right path! You've started your AI journey and feel moderately prepared to adopt this technology to benefit your business. Cisco can help you build a scalable architecture that supports the additional demands of AI workloads, and delivers a reliable, secure, experience for your users.

Steps to build upon your success:

- Understand the current AI IQ of your employees.
- Know your data. Centralize fragmented data and keep security top of mind to reduce risk.
- Document how you continue to build and support ethical and responsible AI usage – ensuring accuracy, privacy, and security of data.
- Monitor network usage and performance to ensure it can support AI workloads and scale to meet new demands.
- Test your AI algorithms to ensure they are free from bias and align with responsible AI practices.

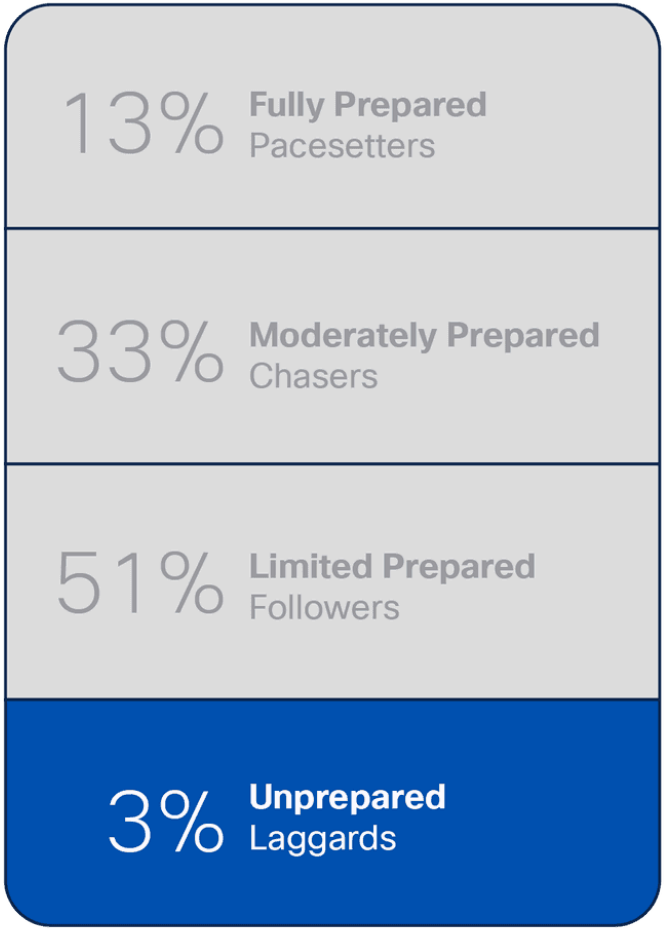


Followers

Deep breath. Not every company is fully equipped to adopt AI – yet. But with the right approach, you'll be ready in no time. Being AI-ready requires much more than technology. You need to ensure you have an agreed upon strategy, goals, data hygiene practices, and the talent and culture to support your plans. By addressing these key elements, you can integrate AI successfully into your organization.

Steps to help you build success:

- Identify storage, data processing, and network capacity needs.
- Ensure the network capacity can handle additional AI workloads.
- Create and document responsible principles for the development, deployment and usage of AI.
- Train employees about how AI can help them work more efficiently. Be transparent about the usage of AI to create a culture of collaboration.
- Go slow to move fast and measure your progress. Share the wins and build upon your momentum.



Laggards

Don’t worry – if you feel behind when it comes to AI adoption, you're not alone. As companies navigate the AI landscape, you can learn from both their mistakes and successes. These simple steps can take you to the starting line, so when you are ready, you can adopt and integrate AI successfully into your organization.

Steps to help you get started:

- Develop a clear strategy and review it early and often with stakeholders and employees.
- Focus on getting your data clean, centralized, and AI-ready.
- Invest in talent to help bring internal expertise up to speed and upskill existing employees.
- Build responsible, sustainable data practices to drive security and efficiency.
- Train employees on AI best practices for development, deployment, and usage of AI across the organization.
- Start with 1 to 3 uses cases and share progress.

Cisco AI Journey

Cisco is here to connect and protect your organization at every step of your AI journey. From identifying the right solutions to accelerating your implementation, we'll help you achieve the full value of AI.

We have everything you need for your journey, all under one roof:

- **AI infrastructure:** Scale to meet the increasing demands of AI workloads.
- **Security for AI:** Secure the use of AI in your organization and across the AI stack.
- **Data to drive insights and context:** Gain differentiated insights with visibility into data across your network, security, applications, and data.
- **AI-native products:** Experience a substantial change in productivity with AI-powered self-healing, automation, and guidance.
- **Services:** Realize the value of AI with faster deployment, implementation, and adoption.

Connect and protect with Cisco





Five pillars to build AI success

How to build an AI plan that addresses everything from strategy to infrastructure, data to governance, and a culture that nurtures talent.

It all starts with a vision

Take the leap

Every organization needs to establish a strategy that is right for their business. 85% of global companies feel they have a maximum of 18 months to implement their AI strategy before facing significant negative impacts. This can create pressure. In fact, 98% of companies are feeling the urgency to deploy AI or AI-powered technologies over the last six months.

How to create a successful strategy

- Establish an AI committee with clear ownership.
- Define goals and quantifiable use cases.
- Create responsible AI usage guidelines.
- Ensure infrastructure is scalable, sustainable, and secure.
- Measure progress and outcomes.



98% of all respondents feel the urgency to deploy AI or AI-powered technologies.

Cisco, AI Readiness Index



13% of organizations feel ready to capture AI's potential.

Cisco, AI Readiness Index

Invest in a strong foundation

Lay the groundwork

AI and ML deployments will absolutely lead to an increased demand for GPU resources to support network scale and AI workloads. While 95% of IT leaders agree that AI will undoubtedly increase their workloads, only 21% feel they are ready to support the computational demands required to train, support, and meet current and future AI demands.

How to prepare for an AI-ready infrastructure

- Understand your organization's existing compute power usage.
- Project required increase in GPUs to ensure optimized network performance and efficiency.
- Ensure security capabilities are in place to secure AI workloads and protect data.
- Establish support for increased power consumption and the organizational infrastructure changes required to scale.
- Measure outcomes.

Ensure data is organized and traceable

It's all about the data

AI without data is like a lightbulb without electricity. It just does not work. AI depends on clean, centralized, and secure data to establish well-integrated analytics, data sources, and AI platforms. It's critical that the use cases identified align with reliable and available data.

How to make data AI-ready

- Ensure hygiene, quality, and reliability of in-house and external data sources.
- Organize data to eliminate silos and streamline access.
- Align data assets with desired use cases.
- Establish efficient data access protocols and procedures.
- Train staff on responsible and secure AI usage.



82% of organizations still have their data in silos across the organization.

Splunk Global Threat Research

Govern with guardrails

A global effort is needed to create equitable access to artificial intelligence.

World Economic Forum Jan 2024

Responsible AI starts here

Because AI can automatically generate insights that influence decisions and actions, clear governance for how AI is developed and deployed is critical to eliminate bias. These tips can help establish a fair and responsible approach to governing AI usage.

How to establish governance

- Understand risk and impact of AI bias.
- Implement mechanisms to detect bias over how AI-based solutions are built, implemented, and operated.
- Ensure comprehensive and consistent checks on AI algorithms and impact to existing and future data processing.
- Define data handling standards to govern responsible usage of AI.
- Measure governance and life cycle management with observability.



51% of respondents say their organization lacks expertise in AI governance, law, and market ethics.

Cisco, AI Readiness Index



31% of all respondents feel they are very well resourced and have the right level of in-house talent to fully leverage AI.

Cisco, AI Readiness Index

Trust in talent

Organizations that invest in talent and help employees build new skills will be better positioned to take advantage of planned AI technologies.

A brave new world

Fear and misconceptions around AI are real and can be scary for workers who worry AI may replace their job or expose a gap in their skills. Embrace the chance to build an AI-ready workforce that can help employees expand their careers and improve their own growth.

How to create an AI-ready workforce

- Understand your company's current AI skills.
- Identify knowledge gaps and areas for skill building.
- Invest in training and hire new talent to build expertise.
- Establish proficiency for data handling and security to ensure responsible AI usage.
- Measure AI acceptance rate and percent of talent trained on new tools.

Embracing AI in your company culture

Imagine the possibilities

There has been a noticeable reduction in cultural readiness to embrace AI. While the majority of leaders may be eager to get started and take advantage of operational efficiency and performance benefits, the number dropped from 82% last year. Similarly, not all employees are ready to embrace change. These tips can help you connect with employees and create a positive conversation around the possibilities of AI at your company.

How to curate an AI culture

- Understand employee receptiveness to AI.
- Address AI concerns and internal goals.
- Communicate early and often regarding AI plans, best practices, employee expectations, and goals.
- Implement mechanisms to detect bias over how AI-based solutions are built, implemented, and operated.
- Share AI wins to encourage understanding and adoption.

66%

of leaders are receptive to AI

Cisco, AI Readiness Index

30%

of employees are resistant to AI

Cisco, AI Readiness Index

Your AI action plan

See what Cisco can do for you.



Infrastructure to power AI

AI depends on powerful infrastructure.

Cisco has been deploying mass-scale infrastructure into hyperscalers for nearly a decade, powering some of the largest networks in the world.

With our expertise and customized solutions, we'll help you scale your workloads to meet the increasing demands of AI.

How our solutions will help:

Cisco AI PODs: Put AI to work for your most common AI use cases with this full-stack, validated infrastructure.

Cisco Nexus HyperFabric AI Cluster: Build powerful infrastructure to run GenAI applications — even if you don't have deep IT skills.

Cisco Silicon One: Gain the highest bandwidth routing and web scale switching silicon powered by a unified architecture.

Cisco UCS X-Series: Get hybrid cloud infrastructure to power both modern applications as well as traditional workloads.

Cisco Validated Designs: Tailor to specific use cases, so you can easily configure infrastructure for optimal performance with Cisco blueprints.

Cisco Optics: Benefit from the highest quality, performance-leading optical transceivers for any network architecture.

Security for AI

AI brings new opportunities, but also new security risks.

Cisco delivers a comprehensive set of cybersecurity solutions to secure the entire AI stack, so you can gain all the benefits of AI while keeping the risks in check. From data center infrastructure to the high-value data AI uses and generates, Cisco protects it all.

How our solutions will help:

Cisco AI Defense: Enable teams to safely build and deploy AI applications.

Cisco Secure Access AI Data Loss Prevention (DLP) functionality: Ensure secure usage of GenAI apps with visibility, granular controls, and the ability to block uploads and downloads of sensitive data.

Cisco Hypershield: Automatically secure the network, quickly block threats, and implement self-updating security controls with AI-powered cloud security directly integrated.

Cisco XDR and Splunk Enterprise Security: Accurately and quickly detect, remediate, and prevent threats with AI-enhanced security operations.

Data to drive insights and context

Data is the fuel for AI.

Whether it's used to build new models or being fed into AI to unlock insights and improve operational efficiency – quality, scale, and trust are essential.

How our solutions will help:

Better visibility: Gain visibility into data across your entire business, including both owned and unowned environments. This provides the context that AI models need to work effectively.

The power of Cisco plus Splunk: Together, we provide powerful data management capabilities to transform, route, and access data for critical security and observability needs.

Trustworthy technology: We partner with leading vendors to incorporate their models into our trusted solutions. We're also building customized models to power our solutions responsibly.

AI-native products

We are embedding AI across Cisco's software portfolio, enhancing our products with AI-powered self-healing capabilities, automation, and expert guidance.

These capabilities allow IT and security teams, as well as line of business users, to be more effective in their roles and unlock new levels of productivity.

How our solutions will help:

Cisco AI Assistant: Easily interact with Cisco products to perform tasks and get the information you need.

Networking: AI is built into the network management system, automating routine tasks and reducing the need for manual work.

Security: AI enhances security by automatically managing and updating security measures, prioritizing important alerts, and quickly addressing threats.

Observability: AI helps monitor and analyze system performance so you can identify problems faster, adjust performance benchmarks, and more easily maintain system health.

Collaboration: Communication is more efficient than ever with AI-enhanced communication tools that provide better audio and video quality, automatic summaries of meetings, and more.

Services to accelerate the value of AI

Along with our partners, Cisco acts as a strategic guide to help your organization be better prepared for AI — from transforming your infrastructure to implementing the most effective strategies.

We help with planning, strategy, deployment, implementation, and adoption to ensure you realize maximum business value quickly.

How our solutions will help:

Cisco Lifecycle Services: Prepare your IT environment for AI.

Solution Support: Get fast, reliable support whenever you need it.

Cisco Success Tracks: Get expert advice, guidance, and support all on one digital dashboard.

Customers benefit from AI-enhanced support processes, including:

- AI-driven virtual agents to resolve customer issues faster.
- Engineer assistants to help engineers work more efficiently.
- Root cause analysis and anomaly detection to identify problems quickly.
- Risk analysis to improve system reliability.
- Automated workflows and natural language interfaces to simplify interactions.
- Topology discovery and correlation to better understand your network.

AI resources

Accelerate your journey with Cisco AI

Cisco Responsible AI Framework: Learn how the Cisco Responsible AI framework guides AI development, deployment, and usage of AI at Cisco.

Responsible AI at Cisco: See how Cisco drives ethical and fair usage of AI across our company.

Cisco AI solutions: Explore how Cisco brings together infrastructure, security, observability, and a data platform for full coverage across your AI stack.

AI in CX: Learn how Cisco uses AI to transform security, collaboration, networking and more for end users.



Thank you for reading

Your Journey to AI

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